

Elm Creek (0512B) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Elm Creek (0512B) in the summers of 2010 and 2011 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Elm Creek is an unclassified intermittent water body with pools within Hopkins County, approximately 10 miles in length. It is currently listed on the 2014 Texas 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2002.

The RUAA identified evidence indicating the designated use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Elm Creek should be revised to secondary contact recreation 1 (SCR 1). SCR 1 applies to water bodies where water recreation can occur, but the nature of the recreation does not involve a significant risk of ingestion. SCR 1 applies to intermittent and perennial freshwaters where site-specific information demonstrates that primary contact recreation has little to no likelihood of occurring due to physical characteristics of the water body such as shallow depths or lack of pools.

Although field staff did not observe any PCR, one interviewee reported that wading children were observed occasionally at two sites after heavy rainfall. Fishing and hunting were much more common activities, reported as personal and observed use. A few stakeholders mentioned that there is no PCR on the creek because it is too shallow, filled with snakes, and bordered by private property. Although there is public access to the creek, there are many obstructions that may deter people from swimming there (e.g. private fencing, woody debris, water moccasins). Elm Creek was publically accessible at six of seven sites. The average thalweg depth was 0.65 m (25.6 in) and three sites had pools deeper than one meter, but only during the second survey.

In accordance with §307.4 (j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR to SCR1 with the corresponding geometric mean of 630 colonies *E. coli*/100mL for all of the 10 mile stretch of Elm Creek from the confluence with Lake Fork Reservoir in Rains County to the headwaters at Hopkins CR 1110 southwest of Sulphur Springs. This reclassification is appropriate due to “natural, ephemeral, intermittent low flow conditions or water levels” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(2).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Elm Creek in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ would provide additional public notice and opportunity for public comment. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would review this proposed change under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act.